NY TIMES 10/9/71 P.31 OP ED PAGE

'The Greatest Article I Read in My Whole Life'

By JIMMY BRESLIN

Richard Nixon's Vice President, Spiro Agnew, writing about Attica under his byline in The New York Times newspaper the other day, said: "To compare the loss of life by those who violate society's law with the loss of life of those whose job it is to uphold it—represents not simply an assault on human sensibility but an insult to reason."

Beautiful. I think it was the greatest article I read in my whole life. Governor Rockefeller seems to feel the way Agnew does, but Rockefeller has a family background for things like this. The Ludlow massacre and all that. Agnew's terrific article came from the heart. Because of it I finally was able to brush off the last shreds of the stupid ideas Sister Anna Gertrude outfitted us with in St. Benedict Joseph Labre School, Queens, New York City.

That silly Jesus Christ. The way that old nun made us learn it, Jesus spent the whole last morning of His life standing in Part XXXII with a real bum named Barabbas. Instead of making a deal to sink Barabbas, Christ stood around rooting for Barabbas to get his case severed and dropped. One description of Barabbas was that he was a boss of thieves in Jerusalem. The first Jewish button man. I used to sit in class and picture Barabbas as Lepke with a big beard.

Another thing I read said Barabbas actually was indicted for being the leader of a revolutionary movement, the Zealot Movement, which wanted to overthrow Rome. One of these demonstrations got rough and a guy died and the law grabbed Barabbas. Whichever version is right, Barabbas was under a heavy indictment and he was given amnesty and we were taught that it was a great thing, the way Christ was happy to see Barabbas get off. But now, reading Agnew, I can see what Christ really was. He should have figured, here, this guy next to Me is only a number and nobody is going to get excited if he goes. Then Christ should have maneuvered the judge and crowd so they would let Him go and make a party cutting Barabbas's head off.

Let's go to the afternoon. Here He is hanging on a cross all afternoon and what does He do? He spends most of His time talking to two thieves they have hanging alongside Him. Sister Anna Gertrude used to get tears in her eyes reading from Luke. And, look at the way this Christ, in a life-and-death situation, worried about thieves. Finally, one of the thieves, I put him down in my mind as a top hoodlum like Bumpy Johnson, said: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

And Jesus Christ, in what I was taught was the last line He said on earth, turned to this thief, this Bumpy Johnson, and said: "This day you will be with Me in paradise."

How do you like it? How do you like what some backward nun put into my head? Here's a Guy has nails in Him and He is wasting His time giving amnesty to a thief, and they had me believing for a long time, Sister Anna Gertrude and the other nuns in St. Benedict Joseph Labre School, Queens, New York City, that this Jesus Christ was great because He died thinking of thieves. I should have spent my time looking at dirty pictures.

At least now, because of Spiro Agnew's terrific article, I know that thieves should be regarded in a crisis as ciphers to be killed and barely counted and never mourned. There are three real good prayer people who get their pictures taken with Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew and it would be marvelous to hear them say something about Agnew's terrific article, just in case there are many people whose thinking has been crippled by faulty religious upbringing. It would help straighten this whole Attica question out if the three really good prayer people, Billy Graham, Norman Vincent Peale and Terence Cooke, would comment on Agnew's article, and how silly Jesus Christ was.

Jimmy Breslin ran for President of the New York City Council in the 1969 Democratic Primary.